



Labour exploitation is considered to be the new form of slavery for the 21st century

UGT launched its campaign “For Decent Jobs, Against Labour Exploitation” today

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According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), two and half million people throughout the world are the victims of trafficking for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation - a social problem that affects us all and is considered to be the new form of slavery for the 21st century.

The UGT Secretary General, Cándido Méndez and the union’s Equality Secretary, Almudena Fontecha, together with the Immigration Director, Markus González Beilfuss, presented the campaign “For Decent Jobs, Against Labour Exploitation” today.

The UGT Equality Secretary explained that, although any worker may suffer from labour exploitation, the fear of losing their job, the need to work in order to survive, the lack of family and social networks, ignorance of their rights, not having all their papers in order or not having access to trade-union representation mean that workers from abroad are the most vulnerable.

According to data from the Spanish Department of Public Prosecutions, in 2008 there were 5,125 alleged criminal offences against workers’ rights, 71% of which involved imposing harmful employment and social-security conditions on workers. Between July 2008 and March 2010, the loss of workers registered for social security stood at 8.5% for Spanish nationals, while among non-EU workers the figure was 15.04%. Since 2005, according to data from the Department of Employment and Social Security Inspections, the number of infractions found and foreign workers affected by them has grown steadily year after year, from 9,535 workers in 2005 to 12,453 in 2008.

UGT believes that the time is right to launch this campaign, because we now have new instruments available, thanks to the Penal Code reform being debated in Parliament, which for the first time considers human trafficking for purposes including labour exploitation as a specific crime, as well as the new Foreign Nationals Act, which now makes it possible for the victims of human trafficking to receive work and residency permits if they lack the relevant papers, and also for victims of labour exploitation who assist the authorities to regularise their situation.

The lack of mechanisms to protect the victims of labour exploitation means that, even if they collaborate with the authorities, they remain without cover or access to provisional permits, and so access to a regular job, during the period until the final court decision acknowledging them as victims is issued

UGT, with these new instruments, wishes to stress the need to:

- Establish protocols for collaboration between the agents involved in combating labour exploitation (at least the General Judicial Council, the Department of Public Prosecutions and the Ministry of Employment and Immigration), together with an action protocol to enable these crimes to be properly investigated.
- Draw up an Integrated Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for the Purposes of Labour Exploitation.
- Prioritise the defence of human rights and help and compensation for victims.
- Set up immediate coordination and instruments for cooperation between employment inspectors, law enforcement and the Department of Public Prosecutions to enable situations of labour exploitation to be detected and prosecuted.
- Build awareness among workers and society in general.



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